

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 ROME 6425

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: 41ST SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS

REF: (A) ROME 1343; (B) ROME 5394 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS IN TURIN WAS
A GREAT SUCCESS FOR PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI AND HIS ALLY
SIGNORILE. THE SUPPORT FOR THE TWO LEADERS WAS SUCH
THAT THEY HAD LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN ACHIEVING THEIR OB-
JECTIVES--GAINING CONTROL OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATION AND
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SETTING THE PARTY ON A COURSE WHICH THEY HOPE WILL LEAD
TO ELECTORAL IMPROVEMENT AND POSSIBLY A MORE COOPERATIVE
RELATIONSHIP IN THE FUTURE WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. BUT THE
PARTY REMAINS SHARPLY DIVIDED AMONG ITS FACTIONS AND CRAXI'S
COMMAND OF THE PARTY WILL DEPEND BOTH ON HIS RELATIONS WITH
SIGNORILE AND THE OUTCOME OF THE FORTHCOMING ADMINISTRA-
TIVE ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

THE ASCENDANCY OF CRAXI AND SIGNORILE

1. THE 41ST CONGRESS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY WAS HELD IN TURIN ON MARCH 29-APRIL 2. THE CONGRESS WAS CONVENED A YEAR AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AS A RESULT OF THE MANEUVERING OF PARTY SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI AND HIS ALLY CLAUDIO SIGNORILE WHO, AS EXPLAINED IN THE REFTELS, SAW THE CONGRESS AS A MEANS OF GAINING CONTROL OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATION AND AT THE SAME TIME OF GIVING ITALIAN SOCIALISM A FRESH LOOK AND, THEY HOPED, A WINNING STRATEGY. IT WAS A DARING GAMBLE, GIVEN CRAXI'S EXTREMELY NARROW BASE OF SUPPORT, BUT ONE THAT PROVED TO BE A GREAT SUCCESS. AS WITH MANY IMPORTANT MILITARY BATTLES, THE OUTCOME OF THIS CONTEST WAS DETERMINED IN ADVANCE BY A SERIES OF MINOR SKIRMISHES--IN THIS CASE AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL WHERE THE CONGRESS DELEGATES WERE CHOSEN. AS A CONSEQUENCE CRAXI AND SIGNORILE ARRIVED AT TURIN CONTROLLING ROUGHLY 55-65 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES AS AGAINST SOME 25 PERCENT FOR DE MARTINO AND MANCA, 7 PERCENT FOR MANCINI AND 4 PERCENT FOR ACHILLI. THE FAILURE OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT IN FRANCE AND THE NATIONAL MOOD FOLLOWING MORO'S KIDNAPPING, ALTHOUGH OF SLIGHT IMPACT, TENDED TO REINFORCE THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE POSITION.

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2. THE EXTENT OF THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE LEAD, UNPRECEDENTED IN RECENT PARTY HISTORY, PROVED SO SUBSTANTIAL THAT IT GOVERNED THE ENTIRE COURSE OF THE CONGRESS. THE MAIN CHALLENGERS, MANCA AND MANCINI, DECIDED THAT THE WAY TO CONSERVE THEIR POWER WAS TO EXTRICATE THEMSELVES FROM THEIR MINORITY POSITION AND JUMP ON THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE BANDWAGON. BOTH MADE SPEECHES APPEALING FOR PARTY UNITY. BOTH DROPPED THEIR STRATEGY OF THE "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT" AND ENDORSED THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE APPROACH ON PARTY POLICY. AND BOTH WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES TO SCRAP THEIR SEPARATE MOTIONS ON PARTY POLICY IN FAVOR OF A SINGLE, MAJORITY MOTION. MANCA WAS PARTICULARLY TENACIOUS IN STRUGGLING TO PRESERVE HIS POSITION AND FOUGHT HARD TO REMAIN A VICE SECRETARY.

3. THE ROUT WAS SO SUBSTANTIAL THAT IT PROVOKED A DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREATEST PARADOX--THE CONTEST SUDDENLY BECAME LESS ONE BETWEEN THE MAJORITY AND THE MINORITY THAN ONE BETWEEN CRAXI AND SIGNORILE.

HAVING WON THE MAIN BATTLE, CRAXI WAS WILLING TO LET MANCA AND MANCINI JOIN THE MAJORITY. BUT SIGNORILE FLATLY OBJECTED AND MAIN PLAIN THAT IF THOSE TWO FACTIONS WERE ALLOWED ABOARD THE BANDWAGO, HE AND

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HIS FACTION WERE GETTING OFF. BY THE SECOND DAY OF THE CONGRESS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRAXI AND SIGNORILE LOOKED LESS LIKE A PATTO DI FERRO THAN A BRACCIO DE FERRO. CRAXI HAD SEEN THE POSSIBILITY OF BALANCING MANCA AND SIGNORILE OFF AGAINST ONE ANOTHER; PRECISELY FOR THIS REASON SIGNORILE INSISTED THAT CRAXI HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER-- MAINTAIN SEPARATE MAJORITY AND MINORITY MOTIONS ON PARTY POLICY AND AGREE TO SIGNORILE'S BEING THE SOLE VICE SECRETARY--OR HE, SIGNORILE, WOULD

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ALLIANCE. CRAXI HAD NO CHOICE
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BUT TO GIVE IN.

4. SO IN THE END THE CONGRESS VOTED ON FOUR ALTERNA-
TIVE MOTIONS ON PARTY POLICY AND THE RESULTS (IN
PERCENTAGE OF DELEGATES) SHOWED THE EXTENT OF THE
CRAXI-SIGNORILE VICTORY AND THE MANCA-MANCINI DEFEAT:

CRAXI-SIGNORILE	63 PERCENT
MANCA	26 PERCENT
MANCINI	7 PERCENT
ACHILLI	4 PERCENT

THESE FIGURES HAD GREAT PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE
THEY ESSENTIALLY DETERMINED THE PROPORTION OF SEATS
IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND DIRECTORATE WHICH EACH
FACTION WOULD BE AWARDED. THE FULL EXTENT OF THE
CRAXI-SIGNORILE VICTORY CAN BE GAUGED FROM THE FACT
THAT UNTIL TURIN THE TWO OF THEM HAD IN A GENERAL
SENSE CONTROL OF A MERE 30 PERCENT OF THE PARTY'S STRENGTH.
TURIN THEREFORE MARKED A REMARKABLE VICTORY.

POLICY REVISION

5. ANOTHER HIGHLIGHT OF THE CONGRESS--AND A FURTHER
SIGN OF THE DOMINANCE OF CRAXI AND SIGNORILE--WAS
THE REMARKABLE MUTING OF THE DEBATE OVER THE
PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY OF THE PARTY AND THE GENERAL
ACCEPTANCE BY ALL THE FACTIONS, ACHILLI AND HIS
SMALL GROUP APART, OF THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE APPROACH.
THIS APPROACH CAN ROUGHLY BE DEFINED AS A STEP
AWAY FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND A MORE EMOLIENT
ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. IN HIS
OPENING SPEECH CRAXI EMPHASIZED THE THEMES OF
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PHILOSOPHICAL REVISIONISM (WITHDRAWING THE PARTY
FROM MOST OF ITS REMAINING THEORETICAL MARXIST TENETS),
EUROSOCIALISM (STRENGTHENING THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST
PARTY'S LINKS WITH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ELSEWHERE
IN EUROPE) NATIONAL UNITY (INTERPARTY COOPERATION
AGAINST TERRORISM), DISARMAMENT AND OPPOSITION TO THE
NEUTRON BOMB, AND SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
AND NATO. MANCA AND MANCINI, AGAIN IN THEIR DESIRE

TO ESCAPE FROM THEIR MINORITY POSITION, DID NOT CONTEST THESE PRINCIPLES OF POLICY, MANCA EVEN MAKING AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY CRITICAL COMMENT ABOUT THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THE POLICY OF THE "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT"--AN ALLIANCE OF THE COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES--WAS PROPOUNDED ONLY BY THE TINY ACHILLI FACTION. MOREOVER, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONGRESS, AN APPEAL FOR NATIONAL UNITY AGAINST TERRORISM WAS ACCEPTED UNANIMOUSLY. AT CRAXI'S INSTIGATION EVEN THE PARTY SYMBOL WAS CHANGED FROM A HAMMER AND SICKLE AGAINST THE RISING SUN OF SOCIALISM TO A RED CARNATION SURMOUNTING A MINUSCULE HAMMER AND SICKLE. (THIS CHANGE WAS TOO MUCH FOR MANY DELEGATES, HOWEVER, AND A SMALL COPY OF THE OLD SYMBOL WAS EVENTUALLY PLACED--TO BROAD CHEERING--AT THE SIDE OF THE STAGE.)

6. BUT TURIN WAS NO BAD GODESBERG FOR ITALIAN SOCIALISM. FOR ONE THING THE CRAXI-SIGNORILE APPROACH WAS ACCEPTED LARGELY IN THE SENSE THAT IT WAS NOT CONTESTED. A PASSAGE IN CRAXI'S SPEECH ABOUT CLOSER SOCIALIST-CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CONTACTS WAS RECEIVED IN TOTAL SILENCE. FOR ANOTHER THERE IS A RESIDUAL SENTIMENT THAT THE SOCIALISTS' NATURAL ALLY IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THIS VIEW WAS PERHAPS BEST ARTICULATED BY LOMBARDI WHO INSISTED THAT SOCIALISTS MUST CONSIDER THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNISTS A PRIVILEGED ONE AND ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND THAT THE PARTY'S REAL ADVERSARY REMAINS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.
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7. NONETHELESS THE DISTANCE THE PARTY MOVED CAN BE MEASURED BY THE FACT THAT THE THEME OF THE 1976 CONGRESS WAS THE "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT" WHICH NOW ONLY ACHILLI DEFENDED. AS SENATOR CIPOLLINI COMMENTED TO THE EMBASSY AFTER THE CONGRESS, "HAD ANYONE IN 1976 DESCRIBED THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AS A MODERATE RATHER THAN A REACTIONARY PARTY AND AN UNACCEPTABLE PARTNER FOR COOPERATION, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HOWLED DOWN. THIS TIME SUCH REMARKS WERE APPLAUDED." TO THIS EXTENT THERE EMERGED IN TURIN A BROAD, IF VAGUE AND SUPERFICIAL, CONSENSUS ON THE PARTY'S GENERAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PHILOSOPHY AND STRATEGY. IT IS NOT MUCH BUT AT THE MOMENT CRAXI AND SIGNORILE COULD LEAD THE PARTY NO FURTHER. MOREOVER, IT GIVES THE PARTY THE ASPECT OF UNITY WHICH IT NEEDS TO GO INTO THE MAY ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. IT FURTHER OFFERS CRAXI AND SIGNORILE COVER TO PURSUE THEIR REAL OBJECTIVE WHICH, AS SIGNORILE EXPLAINED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER SOME MONTHS AGO, IS A NEW TYPE OF COALITION WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. SUCH AN OBJECTIVE CANNOT BE ACKNOWLEDGED OPENLY NOW, EXCEPT AT THE RISK OF OPEN REVOLT. BUT IT WILL BE THE AIM TOWARD WHICH THE TWO LEADERS WILL NO DOUBT TRY TO LEAD THE PARTY.

PASSING OF THE OLD GUARD

8. THE CONGRESS MARKED THE COMPLETE TAKEOVER OF THE

PARTY BY THE "40 YEAR-OLDS" WHO BEGAN THEIR ASSAULT IN 1976 WHEN THEY TOPPLED DE MARTINO AND PUT CRAXI IN HIS PLACE. IT WAS SYMPTOMATIC THAT NENNI, BORN THE YEAR THE PARTY WAS FOUNDED, WAS TOO INFIRM TO ATTEND THE CONGRESS. LOMBARDI ENJOYED THE WARMEST RECEPTION OF ANYONE TO APPEAR AT THE MEETING BUT HIS OVATION WAS THE OUTPOURING OF AFFECTION FOR A SYMBOL--IN THE ABSENCE OF NENNI, THE GRAND OLD MAN OF ITALIAN SOCIALISM. WHILE HE RETAINS SOME INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY, HIS POWER HAS PASSED INTO THE HANDS OF SIGNORILE. DE MARTINO HAD NO REAL IMPACT ON THE MEETING AND MANCINI SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME PATHETICALLY APPEALING TO THE PRESS TO PUT HIS NAME IN THE HEADLINES. (MANCINI'S RECENT ALLEGATION THAT THE CIA WAS INVOLVED IN THE MORO KIDNAPPING MAY HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY MOTIVATED.) THE CHANGE OF GENERATIONS WAS ALSO EVIDENT IN THE APPOINTMENT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE DIRECTORATE OF A NUMBER OF 30 YEAR-OLDS.

DIVISION OF SPOILS--ELECTION OF NEW OFFICIALS

9. THE CENTRAL DISPUTE AT THE CONGRESS OCCURRED BEHIND THE SCENES AND CONCERNED THE APPORTIONMENT OF SEATS IN THE CONTROLLING BODIES OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATION. THIS WAS THE POWER STRUGGLE FOR WHICH THE CONGRESS WAS STAGED. CRAXI AND SIGNORILE MOVED IN TO TAKE COMMAND WHILE MANCA AND MANCINI STRUGGLED TO SALVAGE THEIR INFLUENCE BY PROTECTING THEIR FACTIONS' POSITION IN THE PARTY COUNCILS. AS A CONCESSION TO THE LOSING FACTIONS, CRAXI AND SIGNORILE AGREED TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO 225 MEMBERS. ALTHOUGH THE ENLARGED MEMBERSHIP MAKES THE BODY UNWIELDY, IT OBIATED THE NEED FOR THE LOSING FACTIONS TO DROP MEMBERS FROM THE BODY. THE NEW MEMBERSHIP WAS ELECTED BY THE CONGRESS ON THE FINAL DAY OF ITS MEETING GIVING CRAXI AND SIGNORILE A CLEAR DOMINANCE:

CRAXI-SIGNORILE FACTION 141 MEMBERS

MANCA FACTION 58 MEMBERS

MANCINI FACTION 17 MEMBERS

ACHILLI FACTION 9 MEMBERS

10. MORE DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE WERE THE QUESTIONS OF THE PARTY DIRECTORATE AND SECRETARIAT. MANCA AND MANCINI PRESSED FOR AN ENLARGEMENT OF BOTH, THE SECRETARIAT TO BECOME A COLLEGIAL EXECUTIVE. AT A BITTER

MEETING IN ROME ON APRIL 5-6, THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE
DECIDED TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE DIRECTORATE TO 25
MEMBERS (PLUS NENNI BY RIGHT) AND TO ABOLISH THE
SECRETARIAT, MAKING SIGNORILE SOLE VICE SECRETARY.

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THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE THEN CONFIRMED NENNI AS PARTY
PRESIDENT BY ACCLAMATION AND ELECTED THE NEW DIRECTORATE,
WITH THE RESULTS BY FACTION AS FOLLOWS:

CRAXI 9 MEMBERS (PLUS NENNI)
SIGNORILE 7 MEMBERS
MANCA 6 MEMBERS
MANCINI 2 MEMBERS
ACHILLI 1 MEMBER

11. THESE DECISIONS WERE THE FINAL, HARD BLOW TO MANCA
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AND MANCINI, AND WITH THE ABOLITION OF THE SECRETARIAT THEY LOST THE FINAL REMNANTS OF THEIR POWER IN PARTY COUNCILS. THE MINORITY LEADERS CLAIMED THAT THE MAJORITY HAD RENEGED ON AN UNDERSTANDING ON THESE MATTERS REACHED IN TURIN AND WERE SO BITTER THEY THREATENED FOR A TIME TO WITHDRAW FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE DIRECTORATE. IN THE END THEY CONTENTED THEMSELVES BY ABSTAINING, AT THE INITIAL MEETING OF THE NEW DIRECTORATE ON APRIL 6, IN THE ELECTION OF CRAXI AS PARTY SECRETARY AND SIGNORILE AS VICE SECRETARY.

12. THE OUTCOME OF THE CONGRESS AND THE APRIL 5-6 SESSION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WERE A SEVERE DEFEAT FOR THE MANCA AND MANCINI FACTIONS. MANCA HIMSELF WAS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST SINGLE LOSER OF THE CONGRESS. BUT THOUGH CRAXI DEFEATED HIS ARCH-RIVALS, HOW MUCH OF A VICTOR WAS HE? THERE IS MUCH TRUTH IN IL TEMPO'S CONCLUDING REPORT FROM TURIN: "THE 41ST SOCIALIST CONGRESS CONCLUDED WITH THE RATIFICATION OF THE SPLIT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM OF THE PARTY. NOT EVEN THE EMERGENCY DOCUMENT ON NATIONAL UNITY COULD HEAL THE INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS. THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK ABOUT UNITY BUT, AS WAS INEVITABLE IN A CONGRESS WITH CONTRASTING MOTIONS, EVERYONE REMAINED AT THE STARTING POSITION. FIVE DAYS OF NEGOTIATIONS AT THE CONGRESS, OF SEPARATE MEETINGS AND INFORMAL CONTACTS DID NOT SUCCEED IN GIVING ITALIAN SOCIALISTS THAT MINIMUM OF FORMAL UNITY WHICH, AT THE OUTSET OF THE CONGRESS, A LARGE NUMBER OF OBSERVERS CONSIDERED POSSIBLE, GIVEN THE EMERGENCY SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY AND THE DANGERS CONFRONTING ITS INSTITUTIONS. ONCE AGAIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY PRESENTS ITSELF TO PUBLIC OPINION AS A PARTY WHICH

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THREE OR FOUR ACES, RIVEN BY INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS AND WITH HIGHLY UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS."

CONCLUSION

13. CRAXI AND SIGNORILE HAVE SCORED AN IMPRESSIVE SUCCESS AND TOGETHER NOW HAVE EFFECTIVE COMMAND OF THE ENTIRE PARTY ORGANIZATION. YET THE PARTY REMAINS DEEPLY RIVEN BY ITS COMPETING FACTIONS. CRAXI IS FIRMLY IN PLACE AT THE TOP OF THE PARTY BUT HE IS LESS A LEADER IN THE PROPER SENSE OF THE TERM--ENJOYING

THE SPONTANEOUS LOYALTY, AFFECTION AND RESPECT OF THE PARTY RANKS--THAN A CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD. EVEN AT A CONGRESS WHERE THE LARGEST BLOCK OF DELEGATES WERE HIS, CRAXI EVOKED NO REAL ENTHUSIASM WHEN HE SPOKE. NOT ONLY DOES CRAXI REMAIN DEPENDENT ON SIGNORILE, HIS OWN FACTION IS NOT ENTIRELY SOLID; WITHIN IT, ANIASI HAS HIS OWN GROUP WHILE MANY RECENT CONVERTS, SUCH AS AVANTI EDITOR VITTORELLI, ARE ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS WHO COULD IN THE FUTURE WAVER IN A NEW POLITICAL WIND.

14. IN SHORT, CRAXI EMERGES FROM CONGRESS IN AN APPRECIABLY STRONGER POSITION BOTH IN TERMS OF SUPPORT AND PRESTIGE, BUT THIS POSITION RESTS ON A BALANCE OF FORCES THAT REMAINS DELICATE. AS ONE CRAXI SUPPORTER REMARKED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER, "NOW WHAT CRAXI NEEDS IS SOME TANGIBLE SUCCESS IN THE LARGER POLITICAL WORLD." BY THIS HE MEANT THAT THE PARTY MUST AT LEAST HOLD ITS OWN IN THE FORTHCOMING ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. SHOULD IT LOOSE VOTES, HOWEVER, CRAXI'S TRIUMPH MAY PROVE SHORT-LIVED. HOLMES

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